

VZCZCXYZ6233

OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHML #0538 0630931

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

O 030931Z MAR 08

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9960

INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

UNCLAS MANILA 000538

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: ENTRY LEVEL OFFSITE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL

11. SUMMARY. More than 30 Manila Entry Level personnel, including officers and specialists from State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), participated in offsite training January 31 - February 1, 2008. The two days focused on professional development and interagency collaboration, with significant educational impact despite a constrained budget. Participants commented that the event improved their understanding of the complex coordination required at a major U.S. embassy. END SUMMARY.

LEARNING FROM LEADERS

12. The offsite organizers tapped into expertise both at Post and abroad and utilized technology to overcome budgetary constraints. Significant local and international leadership involvement set the tone and demonstrated keen interest in EL development. The Ambassador offered insights into leadership in the Foreign Service and an overview of the current situation in the Muslim Mindanao region of the Philippines. Director General Harry K. Thomas, Jr., discussed transformational diplomacy via digital video conference, and former Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Maura Harty shared her views on the future direction of the Foreign Service. Acting Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Stephen Mull and Major General Salvatore Cambria, commander of special operations for Asia Pacific, both spoke on the role of the United States in maintaining stability and defeating terrorism in South East Asia. The participating officers also offered their own leadership insights, sharing experiences and demonstrating the varied opportunities and talents of entry level personnel at Post.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND GUIDANCE

13. The first day of the offsite focused on career development for State Department officers and specialists. Various panel discussions offered several opportunities for detailed discussion of career enhancement topics. Small group breakouts allowed participants to address mid-level bidding techniques, Washington tour options, the promotion process, employee evaluations, and opportunities for working outside or changing cones. USAID staff arranged their own parallel discussions of similar issues for their agency.

MINDANAO CASE STUDY

14. On the second day, participants received an in-depth examination of the role of the United States in Muslim Mindanao, a region of the Philippines facing development challenges, political conflict, and a continuing terrorist threat. The Mission's collaborative efforts in Mindanao offered a useful study in careful coordination of U.S. government assets- political, military, and financial- to increase stability and prosperity in a conflict area. Panel discussions examined this sensitive area of the country from the perspectives of Defense, Development, and Diplomacy. Panel participants included representatives from the political, economic and public diplomacy sections, along with representatives from other agencies including USAID, Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, and

the Department of Defense.

CULTIVATING EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

15. In an effort to foster relationships with counterparts at other diplomatic missions, working-level contacts within the Philippine government, emerging congressional leaders, nongovernmental organization partners, and rising journalists, the Manila entry-level personnel organized a representational event. More than 150 guests attended a reception, hosted by the Ambassador at her residence. The guest list was aimed at counterparts of the entry-level officers. Many of the guests commented that they appreciated the opportunity to attend an official Embassy function and forge contacts with a wide range of Embassy personnel. The reception opened the door to future discussions with the invitees, and opportunities to press U.S. policy interests with a rising generation of Philippine policymakers and opinion leaders. Colleagues from other Embassies pledged to reciprocate, in an effort to further develop the new-found contacts.

16. COMMENT. Manila entry-level officers and specialists demonstrated that harnessing local expertise, technology, and creativity can result in a positive and stimulating exchange of ideas. Embassy Manila found this model a cost-effective means to foster professional development and encourage interest in broader Mission goals. Members of the Country Team commented that they, too, appreciated the opportunity to meet with entry-level personnel from across this large mission. END COMMENT.